

BOOK REVIEW

A. MICHAEL POWELL and JAMES F. WEEDIN. 2004. **Cacti of the Trans-Pecos & Adjacent Areas**. (ISBN 0-89672-531-6, hbk). Texas Tech University Press, Box 41037, Lubbock, TX 79409-1037, U.S.A. (Orders: www.ttpu.ttu.edu, 1-800-832-4042). \$60.00, 509 pp, 313 color figs, b/w drawings and maps, 7" × 10".

A book written by two experts on the cacti in the Chihuahuan Desert Region (CDR) of North America. The focus of this book being the Cactaceae in the Trans-Pecos region of west Texas and the reconciliation of the nomenclatural/taxonomic confusion that has evolved in the literature over the years. The authors have meticulously put together a complete synopsis of the taxonomy, biology, ecology, evolution, and ethnobotanical history of this very complex and controversial family of plants.

Western Texas does have the unique claim of being the host to more species of cacti than any other state in the US. This fact has given the authors, Dr. A.M. Powell, professor emeritus at Sul Ross State University, and Dr. J.F. Weedin professor of biology at the Community College of Aurora, Colorado, the opportunity to spend a career studying these plants out in the field, and in the labs, test gardens and greenhouses at Sul Ross and the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute. The authors have given the readers numerous paths to follow when it comes to identifying taxa.

The book includes very detailed Trans-Pecos distribution maps, as well as a continental distribution map for each taxon. The color photography that the authors have included shows the wide variety of habitat in the region. The readers are also given very detailed photographs of mature plants at anthesis as well as plants with mature fruits. Photographs combined with the several levels of keys given in the work, have made the daunting task of correctly identifying cacti much less of a challenge.

The detailed information that is given in the description and discussion of each taxon provides the readers, whether scientist or layperson, with information, and resources that leave no questions unanswered or unaddressed. This book covers the entire history of the study of CDR cacti and mentions numerous opportunities for future study. Apparently there are many taxa that need further study and this book will function as a solid foundation for that work, for many years to come. The authors also mention, to some degree, numerous other taxa that occur outside the Trans-Pecos region, giving the readers a well rounded piece of botanical literature for the Cactaceae in the south-western US. With the selected glossary and extensive bibliography (literature cited) included, it is obvious this very fine book has been a long time in the making.

These authors have now provided the world with the much needed scientific clarification on this family of succulent plants that humans have loved and hated for thousands of years.—Justin W Allison, *Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 509 Pecan Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4060, U.S.A.*